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A decade of showing the Way in Brookfield

Powell's offers unique martial arts experience

By MARIAM PERA
Contributing Reporter

Powell's Way of Kenpo Martial Arts School in downtown Brookfield celebrates its 10th anniversary this year, making it one of the oldest businesses on Grand Boulevard. To celebrate the occasion, the schools is hosting a "thank you To Brookfield" open house on Saturday March 27, from 2 p.m. to 6 p.m.

"Having a business last 10 years is an oddity, just in terms of Brookfield's pace," said owner Bill Powell, a sixth-degree black belt.

Way of Kenpo is the only martial arts school in Brookfield, but, despite its longevity, Powell thinks many people in Brookfield still don't know about it.

"Every great place has to be somewhere," said Powell. "People think we just happen to be their local martial arts school. We're well-known but not known."

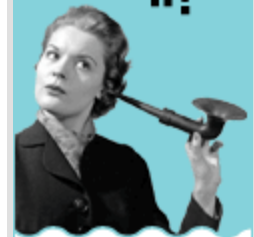
Way of Kenpo offers karate classes Tuesday and Thursday evenings, as well as Saturday mornings, with separate sessions for children and adults.

As part of the "war and peace" philosophy at Way of Kenpo, there are also yoga and healing-arts classes offered by Powell's



Put 'em up: Bill Powell says he's wanted to become a karate master since he was 4 years old. The sixth-degree black belt oversees a class last weekend at his Grand Boulevard dojo.
SCOTT HARDESTY/Contributor

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wife, Bonnie, on Wednesday evenings and Saturday mornings.

"We want to be here for the community," she said. "I am completely passionate about wellness and the peace you feel when you're healthy. This is my ministry."

Jeanine Kelley, of Brookfield, says her son, Brenden, was "always a little guy." He has been a student since he was 5 years old. Kelley says seven years at Way of Kenpo has built up her son's confidence.

Powell said that martial arts has been part of American culture for over half a century, and the increasing popularity of video games only adds to its attractiveness. He adds that there will always be a need for self-defense, citing issues such as school bullying as one of the main reasons parents bring their students in to train.

"Martial arts schools find out what you need deep down and help you. It finds your human needs, more than just self-defense," Powell said. "If you're shy, it makes you confident. If you're confident, it makes you humble. If you're weak, it makes you strong. If you're strong, it teaches you limitations. Often the parents will bring in their children, and end up staying themselves."

Powell has been involved in martial arts for 35 years, saying he prayed every night since he was 4 years old to be a karate master. At the time, he said, the only masters still lived in Japan.

"People are either afraid of karate, because it's intimidating, or they think it's a joke," Powell said. "Unfortunately, people have bad experiences and end up paying a lot of money for a poor service. There is a disjoint between real schools and the other schools out there, and I think that's clear in the energy and excitement."

Jules Brudnak has been coming to Way of Kenpo for six years and already wants to open up his own dojo. His dad, Drew Brudnak, says that Way of Kenpo manages to hold children's interest for years because of the method of instruction.

Debbie Evans, of Brookfield, echoed that sentiment, adding that the instructors at Way of Kenpo make sure the students know what they need to know. Her 11-year-old daughter, Tori, said her favorite part of the experience was sparring and getting to use the skills they learn.

"The teachers here remind me of a good school," Debbie Evans said. "They show passion for their art, and it shows in how they teach the kids. It took Tori three months to get a yellow belt, but she had to earn it."

Powell adds that individuals have to make the decision and "cross the threshold" to be involved in karate. He believes his school offers an authentic and full martial arts experience, adding that other places might offer black belts to middle school kids, while it takes his students seven to 10 years to earn one. However, Powell thinks his students are getting more out of the experience.

"People don't show dedication for something they can get down the street," he said.

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Reader Comments

Posted: Friday, March 26, 2010

Article comment by: LINDA WEINTRAUB, Educational Therapist

I am proud I have known Sensei Bill Powell and his wife, Bonnie for over 27 years! Both are extraordinarily moral, ethical, honest, enthusiastic, and caring people. They are gifted doing what they love: teaching and helping children and adults. Master Sensei Bill and Bonnie are educators one can trust to work individually with a child. Both use positive reinforcement and gentle humor. Each expect every student to do her / his best. A 1/2 step forward is praised. There are no steps backward as Sensei encourages by his essence. Bonnie praises by her gentle demeanor.

You may ask how I know this. My sons and I were students of Bill Powell when while was working attaining his belts, many years ago. I dropped out after earning my blue belt in 'Kenpo.' Graduate School needed my attention I earned 3 master degrees in Special Education.

My eldest son, recently earned his Black Belt in 'Kenpo.' Despite having other black belts, earning his 'Kenpo Black Belt' under 'His' Sensei, Bill Powell, was the only belt that ever mattered. College, took him from Powell's studio, as did his job.

Adam studied with Sensei Powell for 27 years. Sensei would not permit my son to receive this cherished belt until he proved himself worthy. In turn, Adam often teaches children's classes on Saturday mornings, prior to going to work. This he considers a very high honor.

'JUMBO' Sensei Billy, and Bonnie from one superior educator to two others.

With respect,
Linda

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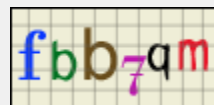
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